



Integrated Environmental & Communication Solutions

HUNTER MILL ROAD AREA SPECIAL STUDY VISION REPORT

Prepared for:
Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force

Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force
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INTRODUCTION

This Vision Report is the result of an eight-week public engagement process initiated by the Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force and the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning. In September 2005, CirclePoint was hired to create a forum to elicit comments from the public on the future of a Special Study Area, created by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, and to convey that information to the Task Force. The primary goal has been to establish the preferred future use of the Special Study Area.

This Vision Report accomplishes two things:

1. Communicates the comments, sentiments and any priorities of the Hunter Mill Road area residents and other stakeholders with regard to the Special Study Area.
2. Outlines issues based on the public comments and suggests some issues that the Task Force might consider as it develops recommendations.

This Vision Report does not include recommendations from the consultant team on what the Task Force, Planning Commission or Board ultimately should do about the study area, although many public comments received during the process do include recommendations.

This document is organized into nine sections, plus an Appendix with supporting documents and materials. The sections are:

- Section 1: Introduction outlines the report.
- Section 2: Executive Summary provides the highlights of the community visioning process.
- Section 3: Project Background describes the purpose, special study area, task force, community visioning process and key activities.
- Section 4: Public Comments include discussion of the comment gathering process, comment overview, decision making, and participation.
- Section 5: Issues for further exploration that the Task Force might consider in its deliberations.
- Section 6: Stakeholder Participation reporting for the community visioning process, community visioning workshop, focus groups and open house.

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Section 1 Introduction

- Section 7: Community Visioning Workshop includes its purpose, implementation, facilitator recruitment, selection and responsibilities, breakout groups, and workshop assessment and implementation.
- Section 8: Focus Groups section has a purpose statement, a summary of the Business Focus Group and focus group evaluation and assessment.
- Section 9: Open House section discussion includes the purpose, implementation and assessment.

Appendices include comment compilations, meeting evaluations and outreach materials. There is also a separate volume available in the county Department of Planning and Zoning that includes written comments in their entirety, as well as the videotape from the October 17, 2005 Open House.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fairfax County, Virginia is a rapidly growing area in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The pace and type of growth is guided by the county's Comprehensive Plan, which embodies policies, objectives and specific recommendations for future development and the protection of natural and cultural resources. In consonance with the Virginia Code, Fairfax County provides opportunity for community comment on the viability of the Plan through cyclical review, special planning studies, and other Plan amendments as authorized by the Board of Supervisors.

During the cyclical Area Plan Review (APR) process, nominations to amend the four area plan volumes of the Comprehensive Plan are invited. When a nomination or group of nominations is complex, involves a large land area or when the nature of the issues suggests the land area of concern should be expanded, the Board of Supervisors may refer the nominations to a special planning study. The authorization of the Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study by the Board of Supervisors on March 21, 2005 reflects this policy. Examples of other special studies involving low density residential areas such as the Hunter Mill Road area that were initiated in this manner include Mason Neck and Telegraph Road.

The purpose of the study is to consider a range of land use options for the approximately 310-acre Hunter Mill Road Area, including the alignment of Sunset Hill Road. These options can include no change to the Comprehensive Plan. To provide the Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force the benefit of community opinion, a public engagement process that culminates with this document was devised. This report is that document. It responds to a Task Force request in the original project solicitation for the consultant to "record and document key elements of individual and group discussions, identify themes, areas of consensus, outliers, and issues for further exploration."

Over the past eight weeks of the community visioning process, several hundred residents of the Hunter Mill Road corridor have been passionately engaged around this issue and at the October 1 Community Visioning Workshop articulated a near unanimous consensus statement that reiterated that the community prefers no change in the low-density designation for their community in the current Comprehensive Plan. The Task Force will reference this report and its findings as they develop recommendations to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

In the visioning exercise, focus groups, written comments and statements made at public meetings, people consistently communicated their preference for no change in the current Comprehensive Plan in very clear and strong terms. Therefore:

Given the frequency of the sentiment and large degree of participation in the community visioning process by residents

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Section 2 Executive Summary

in the Hunter Mill Road corridor, a clear consensus has emerged that residents in the corridor prefer no change in the current Comprehensive Plan land use designations in the Hunter Mill Road area.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In recent years, a number of proposals to amend the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan for the Hunter Mill Road area have been submitted to the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ). The majority of these nominations have been denied in favor of retaining the Comprehensive Plan. During the 2004 North County Area Plan Review (APR) process, DPZ received four additional proposals for amending the Plan. The extent of the area affected and the character of the proposals raised concern among the DPZ staff that the normal process for considering proposed changes to the plan might not allow for broader identification and evaluation of issues in the Hunter Mill Road area.

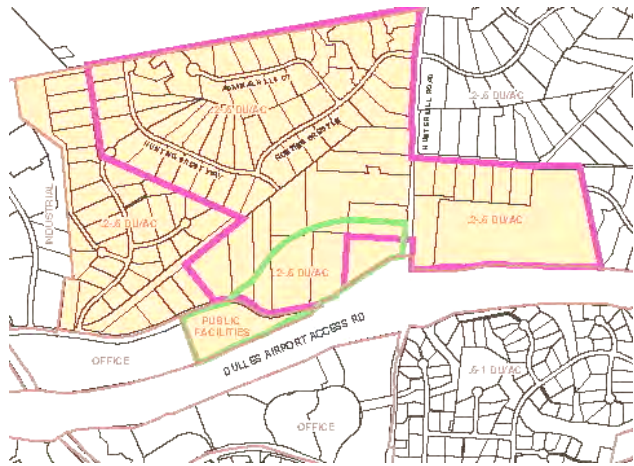
The Area Plan Review (APR) process provides the opportunity for the public to submit nominations to the Planning Commission to consider amending specific recommendations for geographic areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan. Any member of the public may submit a nomination. During the APR process, nominations are reviewed by a task force appointed in each of the planning districts. This type of review is designed to evaluate nominations on an individual basis. Ultimately, action by the Board of Supervisors is required to amend the Comprehensive Plan.

The specific group of nominations for the Hunter Mill Road area involved a large area of approximately 250 acres, but did not include nearby areas of similarly located properties that would have been significantly impacted by any changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Staff felt that it was necessary to consider the proposed Comprehensive Plan changes in the context of a more logical planning area than was represented by the nominations. The nominations also presented complex issues affecting land use options with regard to housing, schools, parks, transportation, public facilities, environmental and historical resources and other county systems and facilities. For these reasons, the DPZ planning staff recommended that the nominations be considered as part of a special study of a larger area, defined and authorized by the Board of Supervisors. The Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study boundaries are described in detail below.

The Board of Supervisors authorized a Special Study on March 21, 2005. A Task Force representing the Hunter Mill and Dranesville Districts was appointed by the Supervisors of each district.

Special Study Area

What follows is the physical description of the study area boundaries as they were established by the Board of Supervisors, followed by a map. The study area comprises approximately 310 acres located east and west of Hunter Mill Road near Sunset Hills Road and the Dulles Airport Access Toll Road.



The portion west of Hunter Mill Road includes all of the parcels east of Lake Fairfax Business Park, south of Lake Fairfax Park and north of Sunset Hills Road, and the Virginia Department of Transportation maintenance yard located south of Sunset Hills Road.

The portion east of Hunter Mill Road includes the parcels located in the northeast quadrant of Sunset Hills Road and Hunter Mill Road, south of Crowell Road that are currently used as a golf park.

In the current Comprehensive Plan, the study area is designated for low-density residential uses between Tysons Corner and Reston. The plan recommends the use of a buffer to separate the low-density Equestrian Park subdivision from higher-intensity uses in Lake Fairfax Business Park. In general, the planned low-density residential area near Difficult Run is intended to prevent commercial land uses in Tysons Corner and the town of Reston from merging. In addition, the planned low-density residential area protects the environmentally sensitive Difficult Run watershed. Over the past twenty-five years since the Comprehensive Plan was first adopted, this policy has had near-unanimous support of residents in the Hunter Mill Road area and Reston, and has been reaffirmed by the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, DPZ staff and community leaders.

In all plan reviews, nominations to amend the Comprehensive Plan were deemed incompatible with the consensus regarding the existing land-use policy and have been consistently denied. Except for a few proposals to add language to address special exceptions and special permit uses, and language about the historic character of Hunter Mill Road corridor, most of those proposals sought to increase density and change the mix of land uses.

Task Force

The Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force convened its first meeting on June 7, 2005. The members are citizen representatives of the Dranesville or Hunter Mill District in Fairfax County, Virginia. According to the Task Force's charter, its purpose is to consider the range of land use options for the study area and to develop consensus around a set of recommendations to present to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Specifically, the Task Force was asked to explore and analyze the short- and long-term impacts of the range of land use options, including but not limited to their potential effect on housing, schools, parks, transportation, public facilities, environmental and historical resources, and other county systems. The Task Force will then use this analysis to form its recommendations. For making recommendations, the Task Force was directed to consider in its analysis the geographic area designated by the Board of Supervisors. The charter does permit the Task Force to identify other affected areas or issues of concern, and may recommend follow-up by the Board of Supervisors or Planning Commission. If authorized by the Board, the Task Force may also study and make recommendations for a larger geographic area. The Task Force regularly convenes public meetings during which it conducts its deliberations.

Community Visioning Process

An important stated goal of the Task Force is to hear from stakeholders. Stakeholders were determined to include residents and landowners from the Hunter Mill Road and surrounding area, commuters that use the roads, and employers and business owners in the area. A priority of the public engagement effort was to convene a series of public meetings during which stakeholders would reach consensus and propose a preferred future land use of the Special Study Area. The public meetings were convened in mid-October in order to fit within the established Task Force schedule. The Task Force established its timeline based on a provision in its charter established by the Board that directs the Task Force to communicate their recommendations to the Board and Planning Commission in December 2005.

To facilitate this process, the county issued an informal solicitation on July 25, 2005 for consulting services to develop and implement the public engagement process. The county specifically sought assistance in designing and implementing a community visioning process. The proposal deadline was August 8. CirclePoint, an environmental and communication management consulting firm, among other firms, submitted a response to the solicitation. county staff and representatives of the Task Force reviewed the responses and conducted candidate interviews during the week of August 15. CirclePoint was informed August 22 that it was selected as the contractor. The contract award was \$29,990.

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Section 3 Project Background

On September 7, CirclePoint at a public Task Force meeting presented a schedule and plan for the community visioning process and for the delivery of the final report. The plan included a rationale for the specific approach to and details about the visioning process, including the specific questions that would guide the community visioning process. At that Task Force meeting, the Task Force raised several specific questions and concerns about the plan and schedule. Immediately following the Task Force meeting, the public was provided an opportunity to express its questions and concerns. In the period between the first and second drafts of the visioning process schedule and plan (September 5-20, 2005), citizens submitted fifty-one sets of comments on the visioning process. All of the questions and concerns were reviewed and considered by the consultant team and county staff. At the September 21 Task Force meeting, CirclePoint presented a revised final plan and timeline that, to the extent possible responded to the questions and concerns. Key milestones in the plan then included:

Date	Activity
October 1	Community Visioning Workshop
October 17	Open House
November 4	Draft Vision Report available for Task Force and the public
November 9	Task Force discussion of the draft Vision Report
November 4-14	Public comment period on the draft Vision Report
November 23	Final Vision Report due to the Task Force

The community visioning process was designed to include several opportunities for individuals and groups to contribute their ideas, concerns, and information. Now that the community visioning process has ended, the Task Force will continue to meet to consider what they have learned from the community, and to develop recommendations to present to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The Task Force continues to keep the process public and open for additional feedback from the community.

Key Activities

In addition to the Task Force meetings, the community visioning process involved four key activities: 1) informal stakeholder meetings and interviews, 2) six stakeholder focus group discussions, 3) a community visioning workshop, and 4) an open house. The community visioning process adheres to the following codes of practice and public involvement policies:

- International Association for Public Participation, *Code of Ethics*, Core Values for Public Participation. 1990; and
- Environmental Protection Agency, *Model Plan for Public Participation*. 1996.

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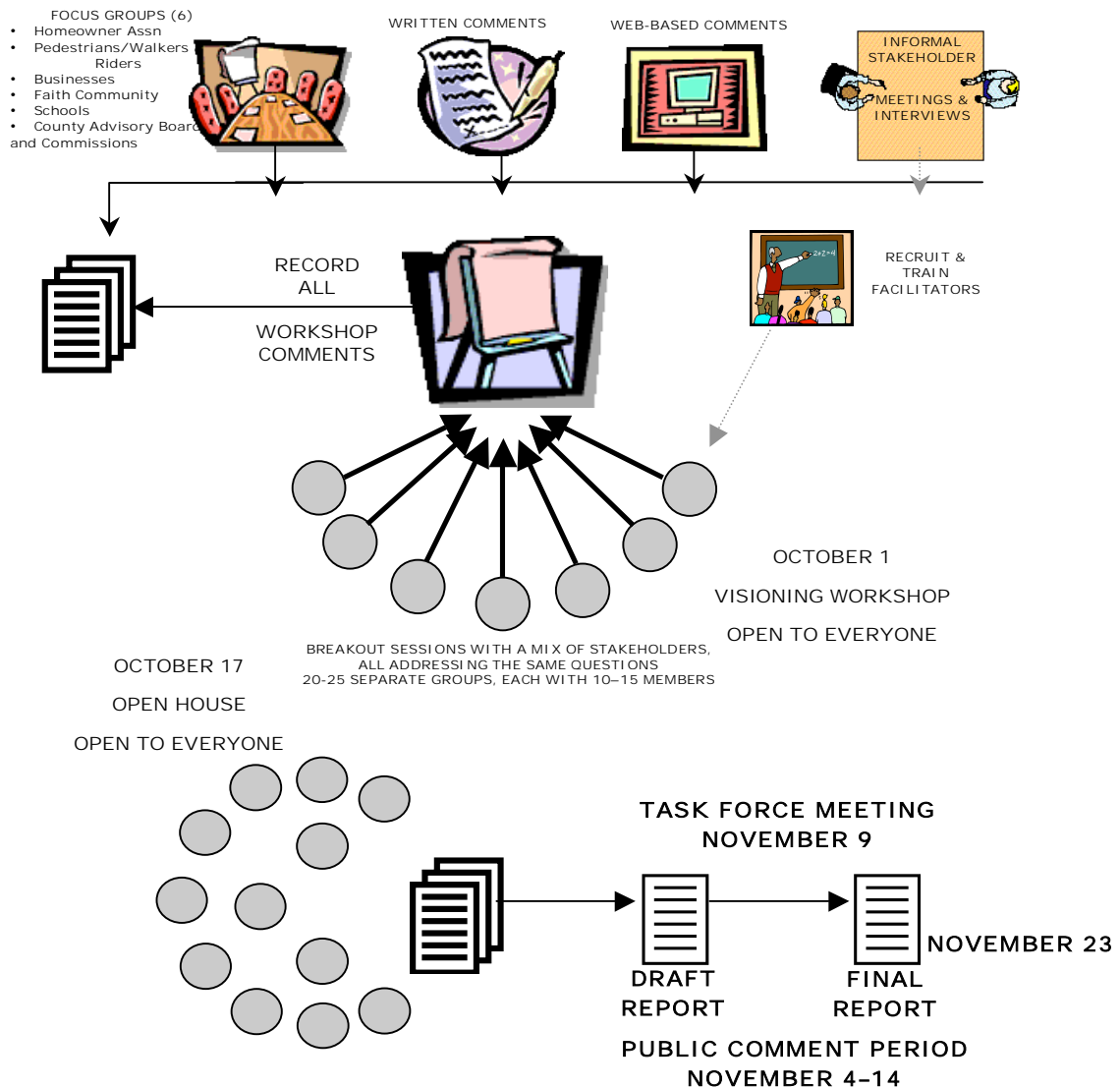
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The graphic that follows illustrates the implementation of the public engagement process. The graphic is followed by a detailed description of each key activity. The process was designed to convene diverse groups of stakeholders and provide as many people as possible the opportunity to learn from each other and communicate their preferences about the study area to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors through the Task Force recommendations. Stakeholders include residents and landowners from the Hunter Mill Road and surrounding area, commuters that use the roads, and employers and business owners in the area. This report was conveyed by CirclePoint to the Task Force and the public on November 23, 2005.

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Stakeholder Meetings and Interviews

The informal stakeholder meetings and interviews were intended to outreach to the community and to begin informing people of the visioning process and for the consultant team to better understand the existing physical and political conditions in the community. There were fewer than a dozen informal outreach meetings or interviews. Most conversations occurred on the telephone or as a side conversation during a Task Force meeting. They rarely exceeded 15 minutes in length.

Focus Groups

The focus groups were designed to engage small groups of stakeholders in conversations before the visioning workshop to provide the consultant team the opportunity to develop a clearer understanding of important issues of specific stakeholder groups. The focus groups were originally planned to include those groups or people who might not otherwise be expected to participate in the workshops, but were expanded to include other community entities, such as some homeowner associations that were already actively engaged in the study.

Between September 28 and October 5, six stakeholder focus groups were convened. Each focus group met for one 90-minute facilitated telephone session. The focus group questions and participants are included in Appendix A. The six focus groups held were:

1. Homeowners
2. Businesses and employers
3. Pedestrian, bicyclists, and equestrians
4. Faith communities
5. School communities—selected elementary schools that are in the Madison school pyramid and that are closest to the subject area or are otherwise nearby
6. County advisory boards and commissions

Community Visioning Workshop

The Community Visioning Workshop was designed as the focal point of the engagement process. The October 1, 2005 event was organized in a format that included facilitated breakout groups so that it was possible in one afternoon to actively involve several hundred people in a discussion. The meeting opened with a plenary session that included presentations on the current Comprehensive Plan, existing conditions, and potential impacts of land-use scenarios. Participants were then randomly assigned to breakout groups. The breakout sessions were led by volunteer facilitators from the community.

Open House

As a follow-up to the Community Visioning Workshop, a public Open House occurred on October 17. The purpose of the event was to share with the community a preliminary summary of comments from the Community Visioning Workshop and to provide an opportunity for the public to make comments on the visioning process. During the meeting, a microphone was available for participants to ask questions about the visioning process and make statements about the special study or any issue they wanted to raise.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Overview

This report integrates comments from the focus groups, Community Visioning Workshop, and Open House. It also includes summaries of all written and e-mail comments related to the community visioning process that were submitted to CirclePoint and the Task Force by October 17, 2005. Oral comments made by participants at the October 17, 2005 Open House are summarized as well. The comment summaries are in Appendices B, C, D and G of this report. A separate volume of this report, which is available upon request through the county Department of Planning and Zoning, includes the written and e-mail comments received by November 14, 2005 in their entirety as well as a copy of the videotape from the October 17, 2005 Open House.

The first portion of this section describes the comment gathering process and synthesizes the values, themes and visions gleaned from public comments in the October 1 Community Visioning Workshop and focus groups. The messages from participants in the Community Visioning Workshop and focus groups are nearly identical and do not contradict other comments.

The second portion of this section presents a detailed analysis and summary of comments in several topic areas. The topic areas coincide with the questions that were asked in the visioning workshop breakout groups:

- Values
- Envisioning
- Employment
- Walking, riding and biking
- Transportation
- Education
- Environment
- Housing
- Faith communities and community services
- Land use
- Themes
- Visions
- Strategies
- Other

There were 15 questions in the visioning exercise, which were vetted by the public, and in nearly all breakout groups, regardless of which question was asked, at least one person and at times

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several people clearly communicated a strong preference for no change in the current Comprehensive Plan. Focus groups were asked similar questions, with the same results. The public was not limited to the visioning exercise questions in their written and e-mail comments, yet the comments were consistent. Again,

Given the frequency of the sentiment and large degree of participation in the community visioning process by residents in the Hunter Mill Road corridor, a clear consensus has emerged that residents in the corridor prefer no change in the current Comprehensive Plan land use designations in the Hunter Mill Road area.

While no change in the Comprehensive Plan was by far the most prevalent message, residents made many other comments that elaborated on why the current Comprehensive Plan was important and what other issues need to be addressed, or remain unchanged to maintain the quality of life and to support the values of the residents in the Hunter Mill Road corridor. A minority of attendees in the Visioning Workshop and Open House expressed interest in increasing residential density, changing the land uses in the study area, or otherwise amending the Comprehensive Plan.

Comment Gathering Process

At the October 1 Community Visioning Workshop, facilitators and scribes were assigned to 23 breakout groups, in which more than 2,000 comments were recorded on flip charts. In the facilitator training session and guidance materials, the facilitators were asked to record accurately the sentiment and language of the participants, and avoid interjecting their personal opinions into the discussion. The facilitators were also asked to indicate how many people agreed with an idea or shared a similar sentiment (e.g., 8x, 8 or 8 check marks means that 8 people agreed with the comment).

At the conclusion of the meeting, facilitators were asked to submit their flip charts to the county staff. Before doing so, each flip chart was labeled with the name of the facilitator and number of the breakout group. Following the meeting, county staff transcribed the flip charts into a single electronic document. With the exception of correcting obvious misspellings and spelling out some abbreviations and acronyms, there was no attempt by the transcription team to edit the comments. The unedited compilation organized by breakout groups was made public October 14, 2005. The compilation can be found in Appendix C of this report.

The comments were then reviewed and analyzed by a member of the consultant team and organized into topic areas. The topic areas generally coincide with the questions in the visioning

exercise. Based on that review and analysis, the reviewer then identified issues and themes from each topic area. Another member of the consultant team then reviewed the issues and themes derived from the topic areas to verify that they were a rational reflection of the comments. Similar to the original compilation, some comments in the topic area summaries also include minor edits to complete sentences or phrases, correct misspellings and spell out abbreviations and acronyms. This summary is in Appendix D of this report.

Additionally, 163 sets of comments were submitted by the public during or immediately following the October 1 Community Visioning Workshop. Forty-four written comments were submitted at the October 17 Open House. With the exception of comments on the draft Vision Report, all other written comments and e-mails submitted to CirclePoint and the Task Force about the visioning process by October 17 are summarized in Appendix E. The summary of the thirty-five oral comments from the October 17 Open House is in Appendix F.

Comment Topic Areas

A large number of the 2,000 comments from the Community Visioning Workshop related to issues affecting land use with regard to housing, schools, parks, transportation, public facilities, environmental and historical resources and other county systems and facilities. However, the majority of comments communicate one primary message clearly: *no change to the Comprehensive Plan*. Still, comments suggest that there were certain aspects in the community that were important to study and to improve.

The initial compilation of comments was organized by breakout group number. To arrive at this summary, the 2,000 comments were reviewed and re-organized into categories corresponding to the 15 questions from the visioning exercise. Once they were organized, similar comments were then grouped into topic areas. Finally, since the topic areas typically revealed recurring thoughts or ideas, the consultant team created themes to succinctly summarize the topics. To facilitate a quick review of that summary, the section below includes only the topics and themes. The entire compilation of comments, with topics and themes can be found in Appendix D.

Values

What are three things you value in the community that should not be changed?

Topic Areas:

- Open space, parks and green space are important neighborhood amenities.
- Maintain the rural character of Hunter Mill Road and surrounding area.
- Maintain the buffer that separates low- and high-density land uses.
- The existing Comprehensive Plan adequately addresses issues other than low-densities.

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- The integrity of the Comprehensive Plan should be protected.
- There is no need to change the existing Comprehensive Plan policy.
- Protect the high quality of the schools.
- School district boundaries and pyramids should remain intact.
- Manage school population to prevent overcrowding and increased classroom size.
- Additional growth will exacerbate an existing problem with traffic congestion.
- Traffic calming is important to slow traffic and to improve safety.
- The neighborhood provides good access.
- There is an awareness of the need for attention to transportation options.
- Low-density residential development is an important reason why people come to and stay in the area.
- There is a degree of satisfaction with housing options and mix.
- Several physical characteristics contribute to the overall livability of the area.
- The natural environment and environmental quality adds to the richness of the area.
- The community is stable and it offers the opportunity for people to build strong communal relationships.
- The area offers a degree of personal safety that must be maintained.
- The character of the neighborhood has economic impacts and benefits.
- Hunter Mill Road has historic value as a scenic byway.

Employment

What is it about employment and business-related issues that people in this area should consider as they look to the future?

Key Theme:

- The community does not want any new employment/business related growth in the Hunter Mill Road corridor.

Topic Areas:

- Business growth would impact roads and cause congestion.
- Business areas should be kept separate from residential areas.
- Should consider telecommuting as an option for employment growth.
- Business growth should be linked to public transit and the Metrorail stations.
- Metrorail and public transit are not the answer to accommodating business growth.
- Consider jobs/housing balance.
- Consider the accuracy of job growth forecasts.
- Consider safety and security effects with increased business development.
- Consider the needed infrastructure to support business growth.
- Should consider regional perspective.
- Consider education link to employment needs.

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Walking, riding and biking

What issues related to walking, horseback riding, bicycling and recreation are important to consider as people in this area look to the future?

Key Theme:

- Parks, recreational facilities and trails are valued by the community. Improvements in trails and facilities are needed and would benefit pedestrians, runners, equestrians, bicyclists and other recreational users.

Topic Areas:

- Horse trails and facilities should be preserved and improved.
- Need more and improved parks and recreational facilities.
- Need trail improvements for bikes, pedestrians, runners and other users.
- Need easier access and greater connectivity to trails.
- Need improvements to the Washington and Old Dominion Trail.
- Preserve the rural character of area.
- Consider funding options for trail and recreation improvements.
- Need improved access to Lake Fairfax Park.
- The existing recreational facilities are currently underserved.
- Adhere to the improvements specified in the existing Comprehensive Plan.
- Should look at the park needs from a regional perspective.
- The Hunter Mill Road area is not a pedestrian community.

Transportation

What is it about transportation that is important for people in the Hunter Mill Road area to consider as they look to the future?

Key Themes:

- Although there is congestion and various areas where the roads should be improved, road widening and roadway alternations are not the preferred solutions.
- Traffic safety, improved bus service, innovative funding, and controlled growth are important considerations for transportation issues.

Topic Areas:

- The area roads should be improved in various locations.
- Should not widen or alter the roads to solve transportation challenges.
- Transportation funding is not adequate and there is a need for creative funding sources.
- Traffic safety is important for all transportation modes.

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- Metrorail is not the answer to the transportation problems.
- Should control growth so that road congestion does not increase.
- Area bus service should be improved.
- Consider innovative transportation solutions.
- Should consider density around the Metrorail stations and transit areas.
- Connectivity is important in the transportation network.
- Need to have accurate traffic counts.
- Should restrict HAZMAT vehicles and trucks on the roads.
- Use of proffers in the rezoning process should be considered for area improvements.
- Consider bikes, pedestrians and others in transportation improvements.
- Transportation funding is adequate.
- Should coordinate construction of transportation projects.
- Consider regional approach to transportation.

Education

What about education is important to consider as people in this area look to the future?

Key Theme:

- The high quality of the schools should be maintained and the school district boundaries should not be altered. The community values small class sizes, optimum teacher/student ratios, short travel to schools and safe travel routes.

Topic Areas:

- Should maintain quality of school system (small class sizes, optimum teacher/student ratio).
- Should not change the school district: maintain existing boundaries.
- The schools are already overcrowded, should not add new students.
- Should maintain appropriate distance/travel lengths to school.
- Maintain existing school pyramid.
- Should consider options to improve the schools.
- Should keep density low because it affects the quality of schools.
- Need more data on overcrowding in schools and should address the problem regionally.
- Should not have classrooms in trailers.
- Need affordable housing for teachers.
- Should consider safe pedestrian and travel routes to schools.
- Trailers can be used to accommodate more students.

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Environment

What environmental issues are important to consider as people in this area look to the future?

Key Theme:

- Future growth in the area should consider the impact on watershed, water quality and water facilities, asbestos issues, wildlife and wildlife habitat, trees and green space, air quality, noise quality and light pollution. The environment should be preserved and protected.

Topic Areas:

- Consider watershed, water quality and water facility issues that are impacted by growth.
- Community is concerned about asbestos issues and it should be monitored.
- Preserve current density and character of the area to protect the environment.
- Preserve habitat and wildlife in the area.
- Preserve trees and green space in the area.
- Consider new park facilities and land before development options.
- Consider and protect air quality.
- Consider noise impacts related to growth.
- Enforce environmental protection regulations.
- Regulate HAZMAT vehicle travel through the area.
- Consider the light pollution related to growth.

Housing

What housing issues are important for people in the area to consider as they look to the future?

Key Theme:

- Although the need for affordable and workforce housing is generally supported, housing density should not be increased in the study area and the character of Hunter Mill Road should remain the same.

Topic Areas:

- Should consider options for adding affordable and workforce housing.
- Maintain the existing character of Hunter Mill Road area.
- Should maintain low-density housing.
- Maintain housing as it is in the current Comprehensive Plan.
- Housing should be located near employment centers.
- Should have a variety of housing types.
- Consider quality of life issues with housing.

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- Consider the impact on infrastructure and services with housing changes.
- Preserve the value of the existing residential properties.
- Consider housing options for aging population.
- Housing should be located near transportation.

Faith and community services

What role is there for the faith communities and social services as people in this area look to the future?

Key Theme:

- The faith communities are important providers of social and community services, make an important contribution to the sense of community, and have a stake in the physical planning for the area.

Topic Areas:

- The physical presence of churches has potentially important implications for land use.
- The faith community is contributor to strong community relationships.
- The faith community serves as an important community resource.
- The faith community fulfills an important role in the provision of social services.
- There is a greater role for the faith community in providing services for the elderly.

Land use

What is it about land-use that is important for people in the area to consider as they look to the future?

Key Theme:

- Land use and density should be consistent with the existing Comprehensive Plan. Residents will experience the greatest impact and should have the most influence in land use decisions.

Topic Areas:

- Land use and density should be consistent with the existing Comprehensive Plan.
- Residents will experience the greatest impact and should have the most influence in land use decisions.
- Do not make changes to Hunter Mill Road.
- Land use should provide appropriate open space and recreation.
- Land use should be carefully considered.
- Land use decisions should consider the impact to all of Fairfax County.
- Should consider infrastructure impacts related to land use changes.

- Development does not have to result in increased density.
- Land use changes can be positive.
- Comprehensive Plan should not be revised continuously.
- Land use decisions effect taxes.
- The Comprehensive Plan should consider change.
- Should have better coordination between land use and transportation.
- Need to make the land use decision process transparent to the public.
- Separate residential and business land uses.
- Land use should be done by professional planners not elected officials.
- Development should be clustered.

Comments about Decision Making

There were many comments about the decision-making processes and public participation. Many of the comments suggest a high degree of fear and mistrust in the visioning process specifically and in the decision-making processes generally. This sense of fear may be because if there is any negotiation to amend the density and allowable land uses in the Hunter Mill Road area, the potential outcomes are:

1. Additional incremental changes that will ultimately require further compromise and potentially undermine core values and create adverse affects on the quality of life in the area.
2. Negotiated agreements (e.g., amending the Comprehensive Plan) that may not withstand changes in the elected leadership over time, or when renewed pressure is applied on the elected leadership, for example, to accommodate additional growth or changes in conditions.

Many comments reference “the integrity of the plan,” and “assurances that the plan would not change” because as one commenter stated: “that’s what we bought into.” The concerns also reflect frustration because many believe that the study is part of a recurring “visioning conversation” and that their concerns and positions have already been voiced but are not being heard or honored. Many participants felt that elected leadership has not been visible enough in the visioning process or generally attentive to their concerns.

It is important to note that participants in the Community Visioning Workshop were concerned that all topics were weighted equally. This was of concern to many of the participants as they felt if one topic were of interest to the person who identified the topic, this topic received the same weight as those topics that were supported by multiple participants.

Public Comments about Participation

The community visioning process was open to anyone. In the eight-week period of the visioning process, public participation increased significantly. In discussions during and after the workshop, as well as in written comments, many residents believed that the Community Visioning Workshop was the only opportunity they had to speak publicly about the special study. According to the comments, although they were public, the Task Force meetings did not provide enough time for more extensive public comments. The public sentiment also suggested that more time was needed to encourage broader participation, and to make sure that more people knew about the process and were prepared to participate.

As early as in their comments on the draft visioning process plan, many citizens who were active in the study process communicated how important it was that the visioning process primarily involve residents in the Hunter Mill Road area. It did. It was further communicated that if non-resident stakeholders did participate in the visioning process that the resulting documentation provide greater weight to the comments and preferences expressed by residents from the Hunter Mill Road corridor. Steps were taken to create balanced representation in the process. The process was designed to get as much information as possible from participants. Workshop sign in sheets were analyzed to determine the addresses of all participants and demographic data, such as place of residence and employment, were collected from participants in each breakout group.

Once the process was initiated, citizens who were active in the study process raised those specific concerns when individuals who represented the nominators or who did not live within the study area boundaries participated in the Community Visioning Workshop. The same concern was raised when the Business and Employers Focus Group appeared to be over-represented by individuals who were not residents in the Hunter Mill Road corridor.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

This section was written in response to the Task Force request in the project solicitation for the consultant to “record and document key elements of individual and group discussions. Identify themes, areas of consensus, outliers, and issues for further exploration.” In response to its charge, the *consultant team* has identified several issues that emerged from the analysis of the topic areas. Accordingly, those issues fall into a number of categories when taken together suggest that beyond any decision to make no change to the current Comprehensive Plan there are some issues that warrant further exploration.

Proactively addressing land use needs

- Changing and strengthening the public’s role in decision making
- Strategically managing and leveraging growth in appropriate areas
- Creating a range of housing options

How can land use issues be addressed while giving consideration to the premise that solutions to regional and countywide problems often yield regional and countywide benefits but create specific local impacts? In other words, decisions made in areas surrounding the Hunter Mill Road study area may eventually impact those who live elsewhere, and vice versa.

Investing in public infrastructure

- Creating new and upgrading existing recreational facilities
 - Focusing investment in public facilities
 - Maintaining the quantity and quality of public services
- 1) *What is the best way to address the current backlog of infrastructure and public facility needs and improvements with the current population?*
 - 2) *Is limiting density a viable approach to reducing future infrastructure demands?*
 - 3) *What are ways to manage the trade offs between limited land and the need for more recreation areas and other public uses, such as schools?*
 - 4) *What level of investment in transportation makes sense? Where and for which modes?*

Maintaining or enhancing the quality of life

- Protecting neighborhood character
- Preserving historic, community and cultural resources and institutions
- Improving environmental resources and quality

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Section 5 Issues for Further Exploration

- 1) *Is there a way to incorporate design standards to preserve and complement the character of what needs to happen so that natural resources and amenities are not overused or exhausted?*
- 2) *What are the ways to maintain the quality of education and ease and prevent future overcrowding?*

Mitigating undesirable conditions

- Providing greater mobility and connectivity of the transportation system
 - Managing the consequences of business development and additional jobs
 - Addressing traffic congestion without needlessly expanding capacity
 - Making roads safer and accessible without exacerbating congestion
 - Preventing dense residential development from encroaching on low-density neighborhoods
- 1) *There is not an unlimited reserve of vacant land for new housing to meet projected needs; what is the best use of what is available to create the necessary range of housing options within the county?*
 - 2) *How are housing options created and improved—where, what kind, and what portion should reflect market rates?*
 - 3) *What are the priorities for transportation investments to address current problems?*

There are other notable observations. Some of the issues and answers focus specifically on the Hunter Mill Road area, such as traffic management at interchanges along Sunset Hills Road and the Dulles Airport Access Road, traffic calming along Hunter Mill Road and providing better access and safety along the Washington and Old Dominion Trail. Other issues have implications to needs beyond the immediate study area, such as the importance of regional recreational facilities, balancing housing and transportation needs, and maintaining investments in public schools.

Decision Making

- 1) *What types of processes would allow the community, business and elected leadership to more effectively anticipate and manage the conflict associated with negotiating the trade offs in public policy decisions?*
- 2) *How can the civic infrastructure be strengthened so that more people in the community have the capacity and information to participate meaningfully in the decision-making processes?*
- 3) *What steps can be taken to integrate planning, development and decision making?*

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Section 5 Issues for Further Exploration

As decision makers, the challenge to the Task Force, Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission is to decide to what extent it is important in this process, or elsewhere, to address these questions. If they are, then:

- 1) *When should these issues be discussed?*
- 2) *In what forums should they be discussed?*
- 3) *Who, if invited, could help?*
- 4) *Who, if excluded, could hurt?*
- 5) *What would success look like?*

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Overall

As anticipated, the community visioning process struck a nerve in the community and sparked significant community organizing and activity. Between 100 and 150 people attended the September 7 and 20 Task Force meetings. Less than two weeks later on October 1, nearly 300 people participated in the Community Visioning Workshop. At the October 17 Open House the number of participants grew to more than 350. In a show of hands at the Open House, a clear majority of the participants at the Open House did not participate in the Community Visioning Workshop. The number of written comments also increased over the same six-week period. A growing number of Internet blogs, Web sites and listservs now link networks of citizens concerned about Hunter Mill Road and Fairfax County. Articles on the issue continue to appear regularly in local and regional newspapers. Including the written comments and Internet communication, the level of participation was much higher than the number of participants suggested by the meeting sign-in sheets.

Stakeholders include residents and landowners from the Hunter Mill Road and surrounding area, commuters that use the roads, and employers and business owners in the area. There were a large number of stakeholders, many of whom belonged to homeowner and civic associations, who have been actively engaged in many land use and transportation issues in the Hunter Mill Road area for more than 25 years. They have participated in other visioning and public processes that have raised the same questions and prompted the same answers with regard to any proposed s to change the density and land uses in the Hunter Mill Road area.

Over the years, there has also been participation in the special study and APR processes by other stakeholders, such as landowners, who submit that the Comprehensive Plan is dynamic and, as required by the Virginia Code, subject to periodic review and change, particularly in an area such as Fairfax County that is experiencing tremendous job growth and housing demand currently and will continue to do so in the coming years. Another group of stakeholders are people who are rarely active in transportation and land use or community issues. They may not have access to relevant information or understanding of how to affect the decision-making process but want to learn and to become more engaged. A final group of stakeholders are those who have a defined set of interests that relate, for example, to specific issues such as housing mix and affordability, mass transportation and intensity of development, and recreation opportunities.

Community Visioning Workshop

According to sign-in sheets, 277 people participated in the October 1 Community Visioning Workshop. Of those, 273 provided legible names and addresses. Seventy-six percent of those attending the workshop identified themselves as residents who lived in the 22181, 20190 and 22182 zip codes. Both are the Vienna zip codes closest to Hunter Mill Road. Approximately three percent of participants claimed residency in the Reston-area Zip code of 20191 and six percent were from Oakton, which includes the 22124 Zip code. Of the remaining 40 participants, 39 were from other parts of Virginia. Members of the Task Force and Planning Commission also attended the workshop.

October 1 Community Visioning Workshop Participants

Zip code	Participants	Percentage	Zip code	Participants	Percentage
22182 – Vienna	168	62%	22032 – Braddock	2	<1%
20190 – Reston	26	9%	20170 – Herndon	2	<1%
22181 – Vienna	18	6%	20165 – Sterling	2	<1%
22124 – Oakton	18	6%	20120 – Centreville	2	<1%
20191 – Reston	7	2%	20111 – Manassas	1	<1%
20121 – Centreville	3	1%	20168 – Haymarket	1	<1%
20171 – Herndon	3	1%	22031 – Fairfax	1	<1%
22030 – Fairfax City	3	1%	22043 – Falls Church	1	<1%
22101 – McLean	3	1%	22194 – Woodbridge	1	<1%
22180 – Vienna	3	1%	22201 – Arlington	1	<1%
22066 – Great Falls	3	1%	22314 – Alexandria	1	<1%
22102 – McLean	2	>1%	20774 – Upper Marlboro, MD	1	<1%

Focus Groups

Between September 28 and October 5, six stakeholder focus groups were convened. What follows is the summary of participation.

1. Homeowner Associations – 6 participants
2. Pedestrians, Bicyclists & Equestrians – 3 participants
3. School Communities – 4 participants
4. Businesses and Employers – 8 participants
5. County Advisory Boards & Commissions – 2 participants
6. Faith Communities – 3 participants

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Section 6 Stakeholder Participation

Focus Group Member Selection

- Task Force members made recommendations for focus group participants.
- Some citizens suggested people or contacts from various groups or nominated themselves. In most cases, these requests were accommodated.
- In addition, other county employees were asked to suggest people they worked with on county boards and commissions.
- County staff also suggested potential focus group members from among individuals and groups active in the community.
- Members of the business community requested that additional participants be included in the Business and Employers Focus Group. These requests also were accommodated.

Additional information on focus groups appears in Section 7.

Open House

The sign-in sheets indicate that approximately 350 people attended the October 17 Open House. This is a conservative estimate because several participants bypassed registration area or entered the meeting through a back entrance. Twelve members of the Task Force also attended the meeting. Thirty-five people asked questions or made statements at the microphone. The summary of those comments is in Appendix G of this report. The videotape of the entire meeting is located in a separate volume available at the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning.

October 17 Open House Participants

Zip code	Participants	Percentage	Zip code	Participants	Percentage
22182 - Vienna	220	62%	22187 - Vienna	2	<1%
20190 - Reston	29	8%	20120 - Centreville	1	<1%
22181 - Vienna	28	8%	22101 - McLean	1	<1%
22180 - Vienna	18	5%	20165 - Sterling	1	<1%
22124 - Oakton	15	4%	20171 - Herndon	1	<1%
22030 - Fairfax City	6	1.5%	20194 - Reston	1	<1%
22102 - McLean	5	1.5%	22031 - Fairfax	1	<1%
20170 - Herndon	5	<1%	22033 - Fairfax	1	<1%
22183 - Great Falls	2	<1%	20009 - DC	1	<1%
20190 - Reston	2	<1%	20016 - DC	1	<1%
22032 - Braddock	3	<1%	20774 - Upper Marlboro, MD	1	<1%

COMMUNITY VISIONING WORKSHOP

Purpose

The goal of the Community Visioning Workshop was to elicit opinions from the Hunter Mill Road area residents and other stakeholders with regard to their vision for the future of the community. The process was designed as a way for people to look forward to the future. The creation of a commonly shared vision would provide direction to Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. There are many paths toward a shared vision but a good test to determine if it is on the right track is:

- The visioning process is community driven.
- Community leaders or those responsible for taking actions in the public's interest should work to build support for and convene the process.
- The process must be inclusive and transparent.
- The process should result in a document that is made available to the entire public.
- A vision should be designed to lead directly to implementation of concrete actions.

The Community Visioning Workshop for the Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study was highly participatory and successfully moved participants to a consensus. In large, community-wide processes, people typically work collaboratively in a highly participatory process. However given a large number of viewpoints in such processes, unanimous agreement is often not possible or realistic. In spite of the large number of participants and short timeframe in which they meet, the people who participated in the Hunter Mill process were exceptional. They were able to identify some important points of common ground.

Implementation

Approximately 275 people representing close to 20 Virginia communities attended the four-and-a-half-hour Community Visioning Workshop on Saturday, October 1, 2005, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Madison High School, 2500 James Madison Drive in Vienna, Virginia. The October 1 workshop was open to anyone who chose to attend. The purpose of the Visioning Workshop was to provide a forum for community members and interest groups to address the issues surrounding the future of the Hunter Mill Road area.

The workshop was structured and facilitated to manage the large number of participants and to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. The meeting opened with a plenary session that included presentations on the current Comprehensive Plan, existing conditions, and potential impacts of various land-use scenarios.

The breakout sessions at the Visioning Workshop were led by volunteer facilitators from the community.

Facilitator Recruitment and Selection

The Community Visioning Workshop required facilitators to lead breakout group participants through a series of visioning exercises. The Task Force and public at the September 7 Task Force meeting were asked to nominate potential facilitators who could meet the following qualifications and expectations:

- Willingness to serve as a neutral third-party whose responsibility is to allow the voices of those small-group participants to be heard;
- Experience as a facilitator was helpful but not absolutely necessary because training was offered;
- Experience in a similar public process as a participant, observer, or facilitator was also helpful but, again, not absolutely necessary;
- Ability to attend a mandatory training session.

These potential facilitators were contacted and asked to volunteer. Most agreed to participate. Others declined because they wanted to be a workshop participant, had a conflict, lacked experience or did not want to be involved. All facilitators were unpaid volunteers. Many of the facilitators live in the Hunter Mill Road and surrounding communities. Some are employed by Fairfax County and surrounding jurisdictions. Others were experienced facilitators who had worked in similar processes. Prior to the workshop, all facilitators participated in 2-hour training session specifically designed to support them in the Community Visioning Workshop.

Facilitator Responsibilities

During the workshop, facilitators were randomly assigned to breakout groups. Facilitators were asked to: 1) keep the group on schedule, 2) ensure that there was active participation from the entire group, 3) establish and enforce ground rules, and 4) record the comments on flip charts, using the participants' words. Facilitators were asked not to offer their own opinions on issues and to adhere to the agenda that was provided. The facilitators were also asked to indicate how many people agreed with an idea or shared similar sentiment (e.g., 8x, 8 or 8 check marks means that 8 people agreed with the comment).

Breakout Groups

The workshop was organized around group breakout sessions that included between 7 and 17 people each. Participants were randomly assigned to one of 23 separate breakout groups. At the registration table, each participant was provided with a nametag that included a number. The number indicated the group number to which that individual was assigned.

When participants arrived in their assigned groups, each participant was asked to complete a participant data form and submit it to the group facilitator. The form was an attempt to address a concern expressed by several members of the public that some groups may be over-represented with people who did not live in the Hunter Mill Road corridor. Underlying the concern was a fear that the weight of comments of nearby residents might be diminished.

Workshop Evaluation

The compilation of evaluation comments was taken directly from the meeting evaluation form distributed and collected at the October 1 Visioning Workshop. At the conclusion of the workshop, 52 participants submitted evaluation forms that included answers to one or more questions. The consultant team organized the comments into categories. The summary of the workshop evaluations is included in Appendix G. The completed forms are in a separate volume.

Workshop Assessment

The large number of participants was expected and the consultant team devised a method to make meaningful and full participation possible. The small breakout groups were specifically designed to provide people a chance to engage with each other in ways a session with nearly 300 people would not. Participants generally found the small groups effective and useful.

At the outset of the meeting, however, it was clear that many participants had an expectation that the workshop would devote a significant amount of time to a question and answer exchange with county staff and elected officials. Supervisor Cathy Hudgins made comments to begin the workshop but the agenda did not allot significant time for interaction with the audience. The participants expressed dismay and frustration that there was not more time set aside.

There are several comments about the lack of opportunity for participants to ask and have questions answered about data and assumptions, before participants were convened in breakout groups. Some did voice concerns with the representation of people from outside of the Hunter Mill Road corridor. Finally, the groups were focused on the accurate reporting of any points of consensus.

The facilitators and scribes made a conscientious effort to accurately record the discussion on flip charts. They were also asked to indicate how many people agreed with an idea or shared similar sentiment (e.g., 8x, 8 or 8 check marks means that 8 people agreed with the comment). All facilitation teams indicated they were successful in this effort. Some breakout group participants, however, did not feel that the facilitators achieved this goal. Other than restating these points of view there is no fair and efficient way to reconcile the different perspectives after

the fact. This did not affect the outcome. Given the number of participants who participated in the workshop and after reviewing the comments from different breakout groups, including those groups where the participants had not taken issue with the meeting notes, it is reasonable to conclude that the points of common ground would not have changed if the facilitation had been done differently.

Nevertheless, several participants expressed concern that the notes from the breakout groups were not necessarily a true representation of what transpired in the discussions. Another concern was that ground rules were inadequately explained or enforced by the group. It is unclear how this has muffled the voices of the Hunter Mill residents.

Comment cards were provided to everyone who participated. One hundred and fourteen comment cards were submitted, though some of them were identifiably from people who had also participated in the workshop. For example, a number of participants from a breakout group at the visioning workshop submitted comment cards in which they responded a second time to the visioning questions. Many of the comment cards were submitted without names and addresses so it is impossible to know how many of the comments came from the same people. Unless respondents provided the necessary information, it was also not possible to distinguish comments from residents, non-residents and representatives of the nominators.

Regardless of how people might have self-affiliated or have been categorized by an outside observer, many shared frustration and dissatisfaction with the Hunter Mill Road nominations and special study process. The normal process, they believe, should have the flexibility to address special study needs. A good portion of the discussion during the Hunter Mill Road study among Task Force members and with the public became heavily focused on the visioning process itself and less so on other issues that needed attention. Among the public there has been a difference of opinion as to whether the study was justified and secondly what was the best way to organize it.

The lack of time and resources made it difficult to fully accommodate the public's desire for an open question and answer period prior to the October 1 workshop. The public was provided opportunities to offer input into the format of both the October 1 workshop and October 17 open house, as well as the other activities of the visioning process. The draft plan was made public on September 4, and was finalized September 23. The draft included very specific information about the proposed visioning process, including the questions that ultimately guided the workshop.

Recommendations for Future Workshops

The following recommendations might help future visioning and participatory efforts yield even greater success.

- Allow as much time as possible to build interest and support for the process. Inadequate time can create a false sense of urgency.
- Do not convene collaborative processes in a crisis—it can take too much time and exacerbate the crisis.
- Engage stakeholders early in the process, including the selection of specific processes to achieve the goals of convening. Success is more likely if all the participants were in on the development of the process from the beginning.
- Don't avoid the conflict—it is necessary in public policy. Anticipate and manage it.
- Provide enough resources for extensive outreach and education materials, such as fact sheets and mailings.
- Allocate resources to hire paid facilitators for large processes.
- Allow stakeholders a greater role in determining how the process should move forward.
- Involve the elected leadership early and often.
- Start the process with the visioning exercise. Discuss specific proposals later. Create a future first and then figure out what it will take to get there.
- Meet people where they are. Provide multiple venues for participation.
- Be clear about the process—who is involved, who is making the decisions, what is the public role and what will success look like.
- Educate, educate, educate.

Focus Groups

Purpose

Focus groups are useful in public engagement processes, such as a visioning process, because they allow the facilitator to test questions for the visioning workshop to ensure that they are framed appropriately and are inclusive enough to elicit rich, useful information from visioning process participants. Focus groups are intentionally designed to receive input from a limited number of people.

Between September 28 and October 5, six stakeholder focus groups were convened. Each focus group met for one facilitated 90-minute telephone session. The focus group questions are included in Appendix E and were provided to participants before the focus group session.

Six focus groups were convened:

1. Homeowners
2. Businesses and employers
3. Pedestrian, bicyclists, and equestrians
4. Faith communities
5. School communities—selected elementary schools that are in the Madison school pyramid and that are closest to the subject area or are otherwise nearby
6. County advisory boards and commissions

Each focus group was designed to include only stakeholders from one of the six categories. Some individuals might fit in several categories but participated in only one focus group. By design, members of individual focus groups should have common interests but may offer different perspectives on the issues.

Focus group comments are included in the previous Public Comments section. All of the discussions raised the same issues as participants in the visioning workshop, as well as those who submitted written comments.

Comments from five of the six focus groups were nearly identical to comments from participants in the October 1 Visioning Workshop. Most of the focus group participants, in fact, did also attend the workshop. Most of the seven members of the business focus group lived in the North County area in the Oakton, Equestrian Park, Dranesville, McLean or Reston, and worked in Tysons Corner or Reston.

Focus Group Evaluation

The compressed timeframe for the visioning process made it necessary to conduct the focus groups by telephone. Several focus group participants indicated that while the telephone format was convenient they would have preferred a face-to-face meeting. Many also indicated that more lead time would have helped with them finding time to participate. There was a perception that several of the focus groups had been cancelled and rescheduled. In fact, only one focus group was cancelled and rescheduled because only two participants had confirmed. When a third participant indicated an interest in taking part, the call was conducted as it was originally scheduled.

Assessment

The purpose of the focus groups was to engage a small number of stakeholders in conversations on a limited set of issues. The focus group discussions were a rich presage of the workshop. The information was useful in preparing the facilitators about which questions were likely to prompt the most discussion and in adjusting the agenda time frames. The Task Force and public had an expectation that the focus groups were an abbreviated version of the visioning process. As a result, the stakes grew tremendously in who was selected and why they were selected to participate in the focus groups. Many felt the importance of the focus groups exceeded the importance of the Visioning Workshop. That was never the intention. Given the level of mistrust and lack of public support for and frustration with the overall process, using focus groups made the process more challenging. As shown in the supporting charts, the ratio of invitations to participation was low. It is difficult to speculate why.

Recommendations for Future Focus Groups

- Negotiate to include focus groups in the original process design.
- Determine the purpose of the focus group and explore whether that is the best or only way to gather the necessary information.
- Develop with the community and elected leadership some clear purpose and criteria about who will participate in the focus groups.
- Provide the resources and time to conduct focus groups face-to-face.

Open House

Purpose

The purpose of the October 17 Open House was to provide the public an opportunity to review the preliminary results of the October 1 Visioning Workshop and also provide the public with a forum for questions and statements about the Community Visioning.

Implementation

Approximately 400 people representing neighborhoods from the Hunter Mill Road corridor and nearby Oakton and Vienna attended a three-hour Open House on Monday, October 17, 2005, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at James Madison High School, 2500 James Madison Drive in Vienna, Virginia. The October 17 Open House was open to anyone who chose to attend. Twelve members of the Task Force participated in the meeting. Approximately 35 citizens took turns at the microphone to make statements and raise questions about several issues.

Outreach efforts relied on the Internet. Two electronic flyers were sent to approximately 700 interested people in the community. They were asked to distribute to people in his or her network. The county Office of Public Affairs prepared and delivered a press release to media outlets. There were reports that several civic associations and many homeowner associations sent announcements by electronic mail or had delivered flyers to residents living in the Hunter Mill Road corridor. In addition, people from some neighborhoods posted a sign at the entrance to each neighborhood encouraging people to attend the Open House.

Assessment

The participants came to the Open House to hear results of the Community Visioning Workshop. Many indicated they had downloaded the draft Vision Report and come to the Open House ready to listen, ask questions or make statements. For several hours, the majority of participants came to microphone and restated the consensus to retain the present Comprehensive Plan. Several participants questioned the absence of the Supervisors at the Open House. The Board of Supervisors had a regularly scheduled meeting that extended into the evening. Several other elected officials, including a member of Congress and state legislators did attend the meeting, in addition to most of the Task Force, members of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisor's staff. The county's planning staff was also present at the meeting. There was very good media coverage.

Recommendations for Future Public Meetings

- Ideally, a second open house would involve discussion of the Task Force recommendation. It will help bring some process closure to the study.
- Much of the anger and tension can be managed if there is a way earlier in the study process to create a Town Hall format at each meeting so that public has a chance to ask questions and make statements.
- Participants in the process frequently raised the issue of inadequate or incorrect data related, for example, to existing conditions and potential impacts of any increased development. The issue of which data and assumptions were valid or adequate was never resolved. Starting at the same place in terms of information should be a negotiation that early in the process.
- When there is adequate lead time and resources, there should be a regular stream of education materials going to the public.
- There should always be an elected official or other decision maker in the room. It is a demonstration that the participation matters. As shown by the positive response from the public to the participation of Task Force and Planning Commission.